News release

PRINTABLE VERSION

About
Met Office
Hadley Centre
Terms and conditions
Accessibility

News
News release archive
Media Centre

Learn
About the weather
From the bookshelf

Services
Mobile forecasts
Weathercall
Marinecall
Monthly Outlook
MetWEB withdrawal
Talk to a forecaster

Links
Met Office data users
National met. services
Scientific interest sites
EA Floodline
Directgov
Freedom of Information

Contact
Contact us
FAQ

Heat-Health Watch

30 July 2004

A joint Met Office - Department of Health project to give advanced notice of life-threatening weather has been announced today. The Heat-Health Watch will operate from 1 June to 15 September and is designed to give information to those who are most vulnerable during hot weather.

Met Office forecasts will trigger levels of response from the Department of Health, NHS and other social care bodies when certain criteria are met. Advice and information can then be given to the public and health and social care professionals, in particular those working with vulnerable groups.

Climate change means heatwaves are likely to become more common in the UK. The evidence is strong, that abnormally high temperatures over more than a couple of days causes 'extra' deaths, and timely warnings and preventative measures can reduce these. Statistics show that the rise in mortality follows the rise in temperature almost immediately. Being prepared followed by timely action is crucial when warnings are issued.

Region	Day maximum (°C)	Night minimum (°C)
London	32	18
South East	31	16
South West	30	15
Eastern	30	15
West Midlands	30	15
East Midlands	30	15
North West	30	15
Yorkshire and Humberside	29	15
North East	28	15

The above figures are threshold day and night temperatures as defined by region. These temperatures could have significant effect on health if reached on at least two consecutive days.

Level 1 Awareness - Minimum state of vigilance, general level of preparedness is enhanced

Level 2 Alert - Triggered as soon as the Met Office forecast threshold temperatures being reached in any one region at least three days ahead

Level 3 Heatwave - Triggered as soon as Met Office confirms threshold temperatures have been reached in any one region or more

Level 4 Emergency - Reached when the heatwave is so severe and/or prolonged that its effects extend outside health and social care

A leaflet is being distributed by the Department of Health which gives simple advice on what to do in the event of a prolonged heatwave. These will available through GP practices, pharmacies, NHS Direct Call centres, walk-in centres, Citizens Advice Bureaux, hospitals, health promotion units, care homes and others.

Temperatures across much of the UK over the next few days are forecast to reach 28 to 30 °C. The Met Office and health officials are in contact and preparing for an early use of this new service to the public.

Notes to editors

- During the period 4 to 13 August 2003, there were an estimated 2070 'excess deaths' in England associated with the heatwave (a 17% increase)
- Met Office forecasts will originate from Met Office Exeter
- At-risk groups include:
  - Older people
  - Babies and young children
  - People will mental health problems
  - People on certain medication
  - People will serious chronic conditions such as breathing and heart problems.
  - People who already have a high temperature from an infection
  - People who use alcohol and illicit drugs
  - People with mobility problems
  - People who are physically active, for example manual workers and sports men and women

Check the latest Heat-Health watch

Check the latest five-day forecast

Visit the Department of Health web site

Visit the NHS Direct web site

For further information:
Met Office Press Office +44 (0)1392 886655
E-mail: pressoffice@metoffice.gov.uk

Met Office Customer Centre 0870 900 0100
If you're outside the UK +44 (0)1392 885680

© Crown copyright